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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2967  
INFO RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000629

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: SHIA INDEPENDENT SAYS DO NOT BLAME US FOR JAFARI  
SELECTION AND CRITICIZES U.S. POLICIES IN IRAQ

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford for  
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Council of Representatives (CoR) member and Shia Independent Mahmoud Muhammad al-Sheikh Radhi told PolOff that Shia Independents were being blamed unfairly for the Jafari victory in the PM race. He downplayed the effect of Sadrists "threats" before the election. Al-Sheikh Radhi also said Shia independents were beginning to organize on a national level, and within the CoR. He expressed bewilderment at the USG for "pushing" an unconstitutional national security council concept; reaching out to groups (i.e., Sunnis) who do not believe in the democratic government, thereby damaging the entire political process; and pushing for the inclusion of Ayad Allawi in the government of national unity thereby "tampering" with the election results. END SUMMARY

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WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR JAFARI'S ELECTION, BUT SADRIST  
PRE-ELECTION "THREATS" DID NOT AFFECT THE OUTCOME  
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12. (C) In a February 20 meeting, CoR member and Shia Independent Mahmoud Muhammad al-Sheikh al-Radhi told PolOff and PolFSN that the Shia Independents were being blamed unfairly for the Jafari victory in the PM race. He believes that no less than 22 independents voted for Adil Abd al-Mehdi for PM (NOTE: This number is too high. END NOTE). He said the independents acted like everyone else and would not rule out that 2 to 3 members of Fadhila voted for Jafari. As for the reports of Sadrists threats prior to the election, he did not characterize them as personal, adding that they did not affect the outcome of the election. He said the Sadrists said before the Coalition

vote that if Abd al-Mehdi was nominated, there would be certain disturbances that would lead to bloodshed in the streets and asking their fellow Shia Coalition members if they wanted to be responsible for that. In his case, he explained that he was sitting with 6 to 7 people, including a Sadrists (whom he did not identify), when the Sadrists member made the aforementioned statement. Al-Sheikh Radhi stated that Shia Coalition unity is at stake and that it should keep unity by standing as one and supporting the election results

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INDEPENDENT BLOC: GETTING ORGANIZED, BUT UNCLEAR WHAT IT  
MEANS  
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13. (C) Al-Sheikh Radhi described the Shia Independent bloc as a semi-organization. He said the independents are in the process of establishing a central caucus and leadership. Local caucuses in each governorate will nominate people (the number nominated depends on the size of the governorate). Those selected will join the Shia Independent members from the TNA and the CoR to form an organization of about 100 members. A central caucus will meet to elect new leadership. When asked if TNA Deputy Speaker Hussein al-Shahristani is considered the leader of the Shia Independents, al-Sheikh Radhi would only describe Shahristani as a "central symbol." Al-Sheikh Radhi did not describe what powers this organization would have over the Shia Independents in the CoR (would its decisions and recommendations be binding or would it just set guidance).

14. (C) Al-Sheikh Radhi also told PolOff that the Shia Independents in the CoR will elect five people to serve as their leadership in the CoR for a three-month period before a new election. (COMMENT. The relationship between this leadership and the national Independent leadership is unclear. END COMMENT.)

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SHARP CRITICISM OF USG POLICIES IN IRAQ  
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15. (C) In a series of questions for PolOff, Al-Sheikh Radhi then sharply criticized the USG for, among other things: supporting an unconstitutional national security council over the government; reaching out to groups (i.e., Sunnis) who do not believe in the democratic government, thereby damaging the entire political

BAGHDAD 00000629 002 OF 002

process; and pushing for the inclusion of Ayad Allawi, thereby tampering with the election results. He added that a national unity government should only represent people and not political opinions, and therefore should logically only include the three main lists (Shia, Sunni, and Kurds). PolOff responded that the USG supports an effective national unity government that includes the major political blocs so that the national government represents all Iraqis, with no group excluded. Al-Sheikh Radhi also said that the Minister of Interior "is doing a great job" and should stay to finish cleaning up the Ministry. He dismissed the claims against the Minister as being untrue. PolOff responded that there is evidence that some MoI forces are engaged in extra-judicial killings and that it is important for the Minister to be non-sectarian, not connected to any militia, and acceptable to all parties in Iraq. (COMMENT : We have heard similar criticisms from several other less well known Shia independents who express distrust for U.S. motives, criticize Sunni outreach efforts and oppose inclusion of Allawi in a national unity government and the establishment of a national security council -- all on the grounds of preserving the Shia electoral victory. END COMMENT.)

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SISTANI: "FATHER TO ALL IRAQIS"  
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16. (C) Al-Sheikh Radhi told PolOff and PolFSN that he is a follower of the marja'iyah and a believer in their leadership, saying they are wise and are concerned with the interests of all Iraqis (not just of the Shia). He described Ayatollah Sistani as a "small, simple man," who enjoys a very modern mentality (more than most of most politicians) and has the ability to influence and control the country. He stated that Sistani does not enter politics and will never join the political business. He said Sistani forces his own people to adopt interests of

other groups (as long as practical and logical). He speculated that those who follow Sistani will likely act the same (as a guide but not a participant in the political process).

17. BIONOTE. Mahmoud Muhammad al-Sheikh Radhi was born in Najaf in 1944. He graduated from the University of Baghdad in 1965-66 with a degree in mechanical engineering. He worked mainly in Baghdad and Samarra in the health/pharmaceuticals sector. He retired in 1994, and worked in private businesses until 2003, with no participation in any clear political activities. He participated with Dr. Hussein al-Shahrastani in the early stages of the establishment of the Shia Alliance in 2004. He was elected to the Transitional National Assembly (TNA) and was the 56th candidate on the Shia Coalition list in Baghdad. He was not directly elected, but was awarded one of the Shia Coalition's compensatory seats.  
KHALILZAD